

**Brenda Hermunstad Yirsa**

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**Medium:** textiles

**About the Artist**

Big Sandy quilt artist Brenda Yirsa became interested in quilt construction about 20 years ago because of a desire to make traditional quilts in the style of her three quilt-making grandmothers. After rescuing fabric scraps from her mother-in-law's stash, she dove in, learning from her own mistakes and even more from the advice of experienced quilters such as Ruth McDowell, Jan Sassaman, Jan Krentz, Gail Garber, Patt Blair, Gwen Marston and Suzanne Huston.

**About the Art:**

Yirsa's work has evolved from the traditional form to an art quilt style reminiscent of paintings in both abstract and realism. She has become immersed in quilting-making as a way to paint with fabric. She continues to study quilts of the past because she believes that it is very important to have an understanding of where this art form came from and to think about women of the past who have made marvelous works with needle, thread, and fabric. It is the history of women making beautiful things with what they had available in their homes even though they did not become famous celebrities in the art world.

Yirsa has taught her daughter and a niece to quilt, working one-on-one with both middle-school girls over the last two summers. She has designed small quilts with the patterns selling across the U.S. She also teaches adult classes in quilting, has been a guest speaker on numerous occasions, and has been a member of the Big Sandy Guild. Together she and several other Big Sandy quilters meet and work to help each other improve in their quilt-making. Together they brought an internationally known quilt maker to their community in 2011.

Yirsa has shown her quilts in a number of shows, including having her quilts selected to show in the "granddaddy of quilt shows" in Houston, Texas. Although her work has been chosen to be in other shows, this was the one that made her feel like she belonged in the world of quilts with all the other quilters, both famous and not so famous.

**Photography by:** Meagan Thompson and Brenda Yirsa